

Joe Biden Says California High-Speed Rail Looking Good For Federal Money

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By Maeve Reston

Though California is in the throes of a budget crisis, Vice President Joe Biden said today that the state's high-speed rail project was well-positioned to compete for a significant share of the \$8 billion that the Obama administration has set aside in the Recovery Act for high-speed rail lines -- possibly more than 10%.

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The Obama administration is still developing criteria on how to allocate the \$8 billion from the Recovery Act for the rail projects, but Biden said federal officials would "look at projects that could be completed quickly and have measurable impact" -- chiefly in taking cars off the road.

"The reason why California is looked at so closely -- it's been a priority of your governor, it's been a priority of your Legislature, they've talked about it, a lot of planning has been done," Biden said in a conference call with reporters after meeting in Washington with officials from several states about the potential high-speed rail projects. "And although I can't answer with specificity, it's possible some of these legs may be more shovel-ready than others."

The vice president said the administration wants "to get shovel ready projects out the door as quickly as we can.... So California is in the game," he said.

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State officials have identified two sections of the project that could meet the Recovery Act criteria for high-speed rail of having contracts awarded by 2012 and work completed by 2017.

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"We think California is in the best position to get the money," [Mehdi Morshed, the executive director of the California High Speed Rail Authority] said. "...We are the only state that has \$9 billion of its own money and the commitment to building high-speed rail."

(This report can be read in its entirety at: <http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/lanow/2009/06/though-california-is-in-the-throes-of-a-budget-crisis-vice-president-joe-biden-said-today-that-the-states-high-speed-rail.html>)